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Tour of Postal Service Facilities in USVI and Puerto Rico Reveals 'Unacceptable' Processes, Congresswoman Plaskett Says

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Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett tours Post Offices in USVI and Puerto Rico By.
OFFICE OF DELEGATE TO CONGRESS STACEY PLASKETT

Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett recently toured U.S. Postal Service facilities in the USVI and Puerto Rico as part of an ongoing effort to see that better services are provided to customers. The move comes as recent setbacks in Puerto Rico have disrupted the flow of mail to the USVI.

“In recent months my office has received a substantial number of complaints from constituents about U.S. Postal Service (USPS) operations in the territory,” Ms. Plaskett said in a statement Wednesday. “The majority of these inquiries pertained to delays in mail delivery, caused by

structural damage to the USPS sorting facility in San Juan, Puerto Rico."

The congresswoman said that in response to these complaints, her office has held several meetings with USPS leadership to demand immediate improvement and requested tours of several facilities in the territory and on the island of Puerto Rico.

"Over the last two days, myself, Congresswoman Jenniffer Gonzalez-Colon (PR), staff of the House Committee on Oversight and Reform, and other Congressional staff visited USPS facilities on the island of Puerto Rico and St. Thomas," Ms. Plaskett said.

These tours included:

- Guaynabo Post Office, Puerto Rico
- Carolina Sorting and Processing Center, Puerto Rico, that most U.S. Virgin Islands mail passes through; and
- Aubrey Ottley GPO (Sugar Estate Post Office) on St. Thomas, to assess the operations and better understand the issues such as delayed mail, damaged packages, long lines, and other problems that has negatively affected Postal Service customers here in the territory.

"What we found was unacceptable. While there are many dedicated public servants working in these locations, including many of our veterans, there are issues that regional management urgently need to address, including updating manual processes that could be automated, more aggressively responding to equipment needs and logistical adjustments, and more actively working to understand the unique challenges of delivering mail to Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands," Ms. Plaskett said.

She added, "During our tour of the Carolina facility, we discovered that it does not have adequate electrical and HVAC infrastructure in place to support all the necessary machinery. However, we did see crews working to bring the building up to standard. We were told that the necessary upgrades should be complete by mid-December. When we inquired about damaged packages, we were told that the way items are packed by a shipper could cause some of the damage. USPS staff also noted that they needed to do a better job documenting how many packages are damaged and where in the supply chain this damage is taking place.

"USPS promised to address the staffing issues it has been facing in the VI and Puerto Rico, which are also a substantial contributor to delays. In addition, we know the rates for the rental of mailboxes has dramatically increased along with certain shipping costs. This was not a primary focus of these visits, as it is an issue that we will need to address with USPS on a national level. We will continue to monitor the issues we are facing with USPS and we are committed to keeping our constituents informed about any progress.